LOVE SO AMAZING!

D. G. S. DHINAKARAN



இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவின் நாமத்தில் அன்பின் வாழ்த்துக்கள்

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FOREWORD

Brother Dhinakaran needs no introduction to the readers of this celebrated book of his. He has been so ably expounding the Word of God in several places ; and his own life has been a witness to its power and adequacy.

In this book he takes us not only to our Lord's Presence and Passion, but also to His Scriptures. The book has a strong Scriptural foundation ; and in each of its chapters extensive use has been made of the Word of God. This is the unique feature of this book. Moreover, the author has expounded the most profound thoughts in a simple and lucid manner.

He has used some very homely everyday experiences to illustrate Biblical truths. This book abounds in well-chosen anecdotes so valuable to the preacher. The thoughts and illustrations are designed to appeal even to those who have not yet known and experienced the love of Christ.

In the fourth chapter of the book the author has very attractively linked and explained the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who follows. He has described the Holy Spirit as the fire that lights the broken heart of the distressed. In the end he teaches us some lessons spiritually so rewarding. I submit this book to God to be of spiritual edification to people of all faiths. May the Lord Jesus richly bless this book to be a means of drawing many unto Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

SUNDAR CLARKE,
Bishop in Madras.

PREFACE

The Bible says that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born on earth in human form to 'taste death for every man' (Hebrew 2 : 9). History is rich in examples of patriots and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the good of their country or to vindicate their principles. The Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, sacrificed his life to obtain freedom for India and to establish unity among her people. Likewise, Abraham Lincoln offered himself as a sacrifice to vindicate his principle that the American Negroes should be granted equality of rights.

But Jesus Christ, when He came to his earth in human form, thus described His mission : 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' 'As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep.' 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you' (St. John 15 : 13 ; 10 : 15 ; 15 : 18).

Yes ! He died to lift up mankind from the morass of sin !

The following illustration will help in explaining this : An innocent fellow, who knew no swimming, slipped and fell into a river overflowing both its banks. He struggled for his life in the surging waters that dragged him down. A small crowd soon collected on the bank. 'How foolish of a man knowing no swimming to come to the river ! Even then, can't he keep off at a safe distance ?' That was a pontificial elder in the crowd.

"Brother! Just keep your head above water!! Hold your breath and cling on to that log floating in the stream!" This was another who had been "advising" people all his life.

Then mumbled a fatalist: "Whom would Fate spare? It is all pre-ordained that he should have a watery grave!"

While all these persons would address the poor struggling stranger in clever words and measured phrases, none would lift his little finger to rescue him from the fierce waters. But then there appeared on the scene an illiterate youngman who knew swimming. He cast a compassionate look on the dying man. He neither spoke a single word nor pondered over the situation even for a minute. He stripped off his clothes and plunged into the waters, straight as an arrow shot from the bow. In a moment he had neared the fast sinking man and caught him by his hair. The flood began dragging them both together. The earlier commentators resumed their harangue on the shore. Now they were all sympathy for the rescuer: "Hasty fool! couldn't he think a bit before leaping in like this?" But he had no ear for all these remarks. Using every ounce of his energy he swam and reached ashore, dragging with him the man he had saved.

The world is in a similar plight today. There is no dearth of people who "advise" those who struggle in an ocean of distress. There are also the detached philosophers who attribute every suffering to some invincible fate. But Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4). He himself leaped into the sea of sorrows,

experienced all sufferings, tasted death on the Cross and saved all mankind.

The words of St. Paul, 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5 : 7, 8), best explain this love.

In this booklet we are going to meditate upon the sufferings and pains that Jesus Christ experienced for 'everyone.'

Beloved reader ! Forget not that all the torture that He experienced in Gethsemane and on the Cross, at the hands of the Roman soldiers, was indeed for you. He has borne on His body every suffering that might be yours in every stage of your life. Hence, an account of the travails of Jesus deserves your careful study. Once you accept that Jesus experienced all those sufferings for you, there will spring within you a divine faith, and God will perform many a miracle in and through you.

Even before you finish reading this book, may His blessing descend on you like the dew and enrich your life and work !

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CONTENTS

I. BLOODY SWEAT

'And being in an agony He (Jesus) prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (St. Luke 22 : 44).

The above words from the Bible describe Jesus praying in anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives during the night He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot. Before retiring to the Garden, with his disciples, he had observed with them the Feast of the Passover. Even then it looks as if he had a foreboding of His own sacrificial offering on the Cross. St. John, in his picturesque account of the Feast, says: 'When Jesus had thus said, *He was troubled in spirit*, and testified, and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me' (St. John 13 : 21). Earlier, when He met certain Greeks who had come, saying: 'Sir, we would see Jesus'—realising perhaps that the time was drawing near for Him to be offered on the Cross not only for the Jews, but for all mankind,—He confessed '*Now is my soul troubled*' (St. John 12 : 27). The bread and wine placed on the table appeared to Him respectively as His own body crushed on the cruel cross and as blood streaming from it. He referred to the bread as 'my body' and to the wine as 'my blood.'

Stung by the prophetic words of Jesus: 'One of you shall betray me,' eleven of the twelve asked Him: 'Lord, is it I?' Traitor Judas also, thinking that his silence might arouse suspicion, asked Him: 'Master, is it I?' Jesus replied: 'Thou hast said' (St Matthew 26 : 25). Again

He urged him ; 'that thou doest, do quickly' (St. John 13 : 27). Even this frontal accusation by Christ could not make Judas change his mind. He hardened his heart and went out to plot the betrayal of Christ.

Rising from the Feast, Jesus and His disciples sang a traditional hymn of thanksgiving, and—as desired by Him—walked towards the Mount of Olives. Little did the disciples realise that it was to be to their last walk by the side of their Master ! On reaching the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus left eight of the disciples saying : 'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.' Accompanied by the three trusted disciples—Peter, John and Jacob—who stood by Him at all moments of crisis—He advanced further, 'and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them : 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ; tarry ye here, and watch with me' (St. Matthew 26 : 37, 38). No longer do we hear the stately ringing tone in which He rebuked the disciples for their fear and unbelief : 'Why are ye so fearful ? How is it that ye have no faith ?' (St. Mark 4 : 40). 'Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?' (St. Matthew 14 : 31). Instead, we hear His request to the same disciples made in pleading tones : 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour ?' He is weighed with sorrow, agony and fear (St. Matthew 26 : 40) ; (St. Mark 14 : 37). Leaving even the three trusted disciples, He goes about a stone's throw (St. Luke 22 : 41). His feet falter, and He 'falls on His face' (St. Matthew 26 : 39). The painful words prefixed to this chapter depict the agony that filled His soul, and streamed out of his body in bloody sweat.

When God made man and set him to occupy the earth, He ordained as follows : 'In the sweat of thy face shalt

thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken.' Sweat is an index of toil. When the human body is put to hard work sweat exudes through the skin. This is natural. In the text prefixed to the chapter we read that from the body of Jesus sweat dripped as beads of blood. He lies flat on his face. There is no bodily movement. There is no great exertion of the muscles. Yet He sweats ! And why ? It is not due to physical exertion, but mental agony. It pierces the mind, spreads to the body, attacks the nervous system. Sweat exudes, and with it mixes the blood from the veins. Hence, the Bible says : 'And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' The possibility of such intermingling of blood and sweat at the climax of mental agony is confirmed by medical science. What was the mental agony that so pierced the body of Jesus Christ ? And what was it due to ?

A. He was the Son of Man :

When the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, to announce the birth of Christ, there took place the following dialogue :

'Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man ?

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God . . . .

For with God nothing shall be impossible.'

(St. Luke 1 : 34, 35, 37).

From the foregoing passage it is evident that the birth of Jesus was brought about by the power of God. He who made the heaven and the earth out of nothing, who lighted the sun and the moon and the countless number of stars in the sky by a word of His, by His supernatural power planted a divine seed in the Virgin's womb to conceive the Holy Child. Since this seed came from God, the angel announced : 'that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Jesus was derived from the invisible God. Verily he was the Son of God.

Yet, like mortals He had to live in human form. Of this the Son of God was moved by the Holy Spirit to declare :

'Then said I, Lo, I come . . . . .to do thy will, O God . . . . but a body hast thou prepared me.'

(Hebrews 10 : 5, 7)

Yes, verily Jesus is 'the image of the invisible God.'

(Colossians 1 : 15)

He may be 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person' (Hebrews 1 : 3). Yet, like mortals, He lived in human form in this world. This aspect is well explained in Colossians 2 : 9—'for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'

Later Jesus appeared in human form. But what dwelt within the human form was divine. The picture of the Transfiguration confirms this :

'And after six days Jesus taken Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

And was transfigured before them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light' (St. Matthew 17 : 1, 2).

While praying alone on the mountain top, the Godhead contained within Him swells up, and transforms His entire body and even His raiment into flaming brightness. Divinity filled Him ; and yet He went about in human form and with all human attributes.

'He was afterward an hungered.' (St. Matthew 4 :2)
'He was hungry.' (St. Mark 11 : 12)
'Jesus . . . .saith, I thirst.' (St. John 19 : 28)
'Jesus rejoiced in spirit.' (St. Luke 10 : 21)
'How Jesus loved . . . .' (St. John 11 : 5)
'Then Jesus beholding him loved him.' (St. Mark 10 : 21)

'And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' (St. Mark 3 : 5)

'He was moved with compassion.' (St. Matthew 9 : 36; 14 : 14 ; 20 : 34)

'He marvelled.' (St. Matthew 8 : 10 ; St. Mark 6 : 6)
'Jesus wept.' (St. John 11 : 35)

'(He) began to be so amazed, and to be very heavy.' (St. Mark 14 : 33)

'And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.' (St. Mark 14 : 34)

One reason why Jesus Christ, the Son of God, experienced such dread, anguish and deadly sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane was because He was also the 'Son of Man.' The text 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers

of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same' (Hebrews 2 : 14) again bears out this truth. Also, it is significant that Jesus Christ, whenever He referred to His death, styled Himself as the 'Son of Man' (St. Luke 9 : 22, 44, 56). Because He lived in this world as a man among men, He is well aware of our sufferings and temptations, and He could very well have compassion for us.

'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted' (Hebrews 4 : 15 ; 2 : 18). Words like these are a source of eternal comfort to us.

Hahnemann, the founder of Homeopathy, was on the look out for a medicine to eradicate Malaria. He wanted to experiment the intensity of the disease and the efficacy of the medicine on himself. He at first injected the malaria parasites into his own body. In a few hours he was assailed by the disease. He waited for the crisis, and then injected his medicine. The treatment was a success, and he was fully cured. As a result, he could announce his cure to the world with confidence.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descended to the earth in human form to experience its sorrows and tribulations. As long as He was in the heaven above He could not know the sorrows of man. Hence He descended to the earth, and lived as a mortal for 33½ years in this world of ours inflicted with sin and sorrow. How boundless is His love for us ! He is well aware of our problems in life, our sorrows and tears. When we take our problems to Him He could very well understand them, and have compassion for us. The following paragraphs will explain this further.

B. The Fulfilment of Prophecy :

> ' He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . .'
>
> ' Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : . . . .' (Isaiah 53 : 3, 4)

Hundreds of years before Jesus, the Son of God, was born on earth as a man, there lived a man of God called Isaiah. The Holy Spirit rested on him (2 Peter 1 : 21). Accordingly, Isaiah, impelled by the Holy Spirit, clearly foretold that Jesus would be born as a man of a virgin (Isaiah 7 : 14 ; 9 : 6), that He would perform several miracles among men (Isaiah 35 : 4-6, 61 : 1-3) but ultimately be put to cruel death by jealous people (Isaiah 52 : 14 ; Ch. 53). Every word that God spoke through the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus was accordingly of a cruel sort.

Isaiah had even foretold the agony of Jesus Christ on the eve of His death (Isaiah 53 : 3, 4). While the earlier verse speaks of Him as 'a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief', the following verse makes a significant addition : ' Surely, he hath borne *our* griefs ; and carried *our* sorrows.' Let us look intently at this verse. Whose griefs, whose sorrows did Jesus carry ? Isaiah says that they were OURS ! What a great mystery is this ! What Christ bore with bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane was not His grief. It was *ours*—yours and mine, that of every father and mother, every youth and child. What a comforting truth in this !

A man's life is composed of soul, mind and body. Only if all these three are whole and healthy, life is perfect. Sin is a cancer that eats into one's soul. A sinful soul languishes

with no peace, cut off from God. The body inhabited by it may be healthy, and the mind steeped in mirth. But such a life is only wasteful.

Many years ago a celebrated film actress committed suicide. People all over the world were shocked and surprised at the news. For, by human standards, she had everything one could aspire for. She had amassed wealth and fame. She was a matchless beauty. Countless young men adored her, and her picture was found in many homes and engraved in the hearts of her numerous fans. One evening she participated in a dinner party in honour of the newly elected President of her country in his mansion and entertained the distinguished gathering. She returned home at night, and the morning papers announced her suicide.

Everywhere there was excitement or shock. People asked themselves : 'Why ? Why ?' The police officers scanned her Diary. Her last entry was : 'I am tortured by loneliness.' Yes, one who was adored as a goddess by tens of thousands had written so. Health and beauty filled her body. Her mind was steeped in the pleasures of the filmdom. Yet her soul had no peace. God alone can fill the soul with peace. Only the soul where God dwells can overflow with divine peace. Don't the scriptures say : 'There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked'? (Isaiah 48 : 22 ; 57 : 21). The disease that set in her soul spread to her mind and ultimately poisoned her body. A life at the topmost rung of the ladder of fame was extinguished all in a moment.

So also, every physical ailment makes a hell of ones' life. I know one saintly Christian friend who by his incessant labours built up and maintained a Church in a leading North Indian city. He held a high position in a private

agency, and yet devoted all the time he could spare to the ministry of the Church. His mind was always filled with hymns of praise. His face always beamed with joy. Once when I visited that city I called on him in his house. He welcomed me in his characteristically pleasant manner. But I had a shock on seeing the change in his appearance. His body had been afflicted by a deadly disease, and he was all skin and bones. Unable to go to his office or the church he loved, he was confined to bed. Unable to restrain myself, I burst out weeping for him. His soul was filled with devotion, and he had a mind so child-like in its innocence. Yet his physical ailment shattered all joy in his life and brought it to a standstill.

Thanks to the grace of Jesus Christ, I had the opportunity of visiting a country abroad some months ago. I marvelled at its riches and grandeur. I wondered whether it was the land overflowing with milk and honey mentioned in the Bible. Everywhere people went about with joy beaming in their faces. I even felt a little jealous of those blessed people. A few days later I was conversing with one of their priests. What he told me then about his country stunned me. He said: 'The largest number of mentally' sick persons are to be found in our country. Several of them spend their whole lives pathetically in mental asylums. In a country with fabulous wealth, where people looked so healthy, what is it that consigned so many of them to the mental asylums? The cancer of worry eats into and shatters their minds. When the mind, which links the soul and the body, snaps, the harmony is lost; and the body which contains the soul languishes in the asylum.

The above three examples bring home to us an eternal truth. For a human life to be perfect there should be health and harmony between soul, mind and body. Even if one

of them is damaged then life becomes a broken vessel. Take a motor car. It has a colourful attractive body. It contains an engine that drives it. There is petrol inside which energises the engine. All these three should be in good condition if the motor car is to function perfectly So also, for the human life to be perfect, there is absolute need for health and harmony among soul, mind and body.

Let us examine what the Bible has to say about the cancer that shatters the health of one's mind and its relationship to the 'bloody sweat' of Jesus Christ, the Son of God !

> 'Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop.'
> 'By the sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.'
> 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness.'
>
> (Proverbs 13 : 25 ; 15 : 13 ; 14 : 10)

The above verse give three names to the cancer that eats into man's mind—'heaviness', 'sorrow', and 'bitterness'. Even as Cholera, Tuberculosis and Typhoid germs enter a healthy body and infect it, this worry enters the human mind, paralyses it and causes mental sickness which makes a hell of this life.

A minister of God was once invited to pray for a very old lady. He was shocked to see her hands and legs tied to an easy chair. It was explained that the lady had no children and no house of her own. She was obsessed with worry as to where she could reside in her old age. She was all the time mumbling some words to that effect. The thought assailed her brain and affected her mind. Her friends and relatives assured her that they would provide for her in her old age. Yet she was restless, and would run about unconsciously, and so had to be kept tied to the easy chair.

This one incident explains very clearly what a deadly cancer this 'heaviness or sorrow or bitterness is'. How essential is it for us to flee from this cancer, even as we do from other disease bearing germs? The question arises if there is any way of escape from this deadly enemy. There is one comforting thought. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night of His betrayal by Judas, confronted this deadly enemy of mankind face to face. He experienced himself its poisonous attack but scored a decisive victory over its power.

A look back at Isaiah's prophesy will help us to understand the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane between the Son of God and this enemy of mankind:

> 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief: . . . . .'
>
> 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . . .'
>
> (Isaiah 53 : 3, 4)

The four human attributes seen in Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane were 'sorrow, heaviness, dread and sorrow unto death' (St. Matthew 26 : 37, 38; St. Mark 14 : 33). How is it that these attributes, not seen in Him during the 33½ years of His life on earth, became so suddenly manifest in Him now? That was because He chose to carry the sorrows to be experienced by the entire mankind. What a burden it should have been! Even if Jesus had borne the sorrows of the sixty crores of Indians what a burden it would have been!

In the early years of this century there lived in England a saintly person called Smith Wigglesworth. Filled with the love of Christ, he made it his mission to pray for those

afflicted with sickness, all over the world. Countless were the persons healed by his prayers, and strange is the account of his death.

In his old age Wigglesworth had been to the church to attend the funeral of a close friend of his. There he met another friend of his whose daughter suffered from a deadly disease and for whom Wigglesworth had gone and prayed sometimes in the past ! With great concern Wigglesworth enquired about her, and the father said so sadly that she was still in the same miserable condition. Taking his friend's burden on himself, Wigglesworth asked : 'Is she not well as yet ?' and heaved a sigh. The sorrow struck his heart : and alongwith his deep sigh, fled his precious soul to the feet of Lord Jesus ! Yea ! He died at once !

While regarding the grief of one man as his own and attempting to bear it, Wigglesworth broke down and his heart failed. When Christ bore the sorrows of sixty crores of Indians and of the entire mankind what would have been the agony in His heart ? His mental agony gradually assailed His heart, affected the nerves, raised the pressure of the blood, making it mix with His sweat. Unable to bear the agony, Jesus faltered and fell upon His face. The sweat exuding from His body brought His blood alongwith it. This was the secret of His, 'bloody sweat'. A poet thus laments the sinless Son of God being soaked with bloody sweat :

1. 'Tis midnight and on Olive's brow
The star is dimm'd that lately shone ;
'Tis midnight in the garden now
The suff'ring Saviour prays alone.

2. 'Tis midnight and for others' guilt
The man of sorrows weeps in blood ;
Yet He, who hath in anguish knelt,
Is not forsaken by His God.

The answer is that Jesus took upon Himself the sorrows and sufferings of all of us and groaned under the weight. He began praying to God the Father : 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me' but concluded : 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done' (Matt. 26 : 39, 42). As foretold by the prophet, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief' (Isaiah 53 : 10) and as ordained by God, the agony that should be ours for various reasons was thrust on Him, and He broke down and was crushed under the burden. Bloody sweat exuded from His body.

We live in a world filled with sorrow, heaviness, agony and fear. We are worried by a different problem each day. We despair as to where we could go and who would cast away our sorrows. We are pressed by the burden of life day after day, leaving tears in our eyes and fear in our minds. For those who pass their lives in distress, saying with the Psalmist : 'My tears have been my meat day and night' (Psalm 42 : 3), there is good news ! The mental agony experienced by us today has been already experienced by him in the Garden of Gethsemane 2000 years ago. **Today when we take our problems to His feet in prayer, His mind goes back to Gethsemane and the bitter agony He experienced there.** He is moved with compassion for us which delivers us from all our problems. Because he prayed in Gethsemane, 'with strong crying and tears', even today when we tearfully plead in His presence, He hears us and hastens

to wipe away all our tears. Bearing this in mind, a saint has sung as follows :

'Wiping our bitterest tears, guarding us safe in His arms, Bearing us through the most painful of losses, He surely restores us to safety and joy-Jesus Calls us all.'

Christ Himself spoke the following words of comfort :

'Take therefore no thought for morrow ; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.'
(St. Matthew 6 : 34)

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (St. Matthew 11 : 28)

And St. Paul, the disciple who bore the marks of his Master, told us :

'Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'
(Philippians 4 : 6, 7)

The bloody sweat which poured out of Jesus prevents our shedding bloody tears in our moments of agony and gives us a fresh lease of life. I am reminded of one family which got such a lease of life through Jesus.

There lived a husband and wife with their five children. They were in utter poverty. Steeped in debts, they lost even the house they lived in. One day one of the boys had been to the shop. Because he was a poor boy the shop-keeper foisted a theft on him, and the boy came home weep-

ing. This incident very much pained the sensitive mother. She felt that life was not worth living.

She waited till her husband had gone to his office and the four elder children to their school. She shut herself and the five year old youngest child in a room, closed all the doors and windows, and turned on the cooking gas. Hugging the child, she reclined in her bed, broken-hearted and looking forward to her death. The child began asking all sorts of questions! 'Mummy! Just now we woke up. How is it we lie down again? Mummy! It is so hot. Why have you closed the doors and windows? The mother just told her: 'Shut up!' What else could she say when the ship of life was sinking? Just then there came over the air, from the radio receiver outside, the strains of the memorable hymn:

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit!
Oh, what needless pain we bear!
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

The love of Christ enshrined in the hymn touched her heart, and instilled fresh hope in her. She sprang from the bed, hugged the child, and opening the door, ran out of the room. Sitting by the side of the radio, she wept profusely and prayed in anguish : 'Lord Jesus ! pardon my attempted suicide ! Forgive my shortcomings ! I pour all my problems at your feet. Save me and my family.' Jesus, who had once in Gethsemane prayed likewise in agony, heard her mournful pleading. He granted her peace of mind. The situation began to change. The family recovered its former prosperity, and again became a source of comfort to many.

What gave a fresh lease of life to this family was the bloody sweat of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, poured in Gethsemane. That will give a fresh lease of life to us as well.

C. Sorrow unto Death :

In the Garden of Gethsemane, which Jesus began 'to be sorrowful and very heavy', he told his disciples : 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' (St. Matthew 26 : 38). He who said that He came to 'lay down His life for the sheep' (St. John 10 : 15) now, at the appointed time, shrinks from the 'sorrow unto death'. And why ? What does the Bible say ?

> ' He also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death the might . . . . . deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' (Hebrews 2 : 14, 15).

The one thing that nobody desires and everybody shudders at in fear is death. Is there anyone with no fear of death ? For those who love Him to attain

release from the pain and fear of death and live in joy, Jesus experienced the climax of sorrow, namely 'sorrow unto death'. Even as alloving mother takes in a bitter medicine so that its power may permeate to her breast fed child and heal its sickness. Jesus forestalled His followers passing through the horrors of death by experiencing them Himself in Gethsemane. Yes, the 'bloody sweat' of Jesus was meant to dispel from us the 'sorrow unto death'.

Release from fear of death is another boon conferred by Jesus on those who have surrendered their lives at His feet and whose sins have been washed by His precious blood. And how did the disciples of Jesus refer to death ? St. Paul said :

'and the time of my departure, is at hand . . . . .
. . . . I have finished my course'.

(II Timothy 4 : 6,7)

'For I am . . . . .having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. . . . . '

(Pilippians 1 ; 23)

He did not refer to death with any fear. He looked forward with joy to the life after death, with Christ.

I know one worker who did God's ministry with much self-sacrifice. In one of his meetings he said that a few days ago he had a dream. A brother who had died earlier appeared in the dream and asked him : 'Are you also ready to end the journey of life ?' He assured his hearer that he was quite prepared to die and go to meet his Maker. Accordingly, in three days he died very peacefully in bed and joined the presence of his Master.

The 'bloody sweat' of Jesus was meant not only to forestall our own agony and pain in this world. It was also meant to comfort us at the time of the parting of our body and soul. Have we accepted Jesus who poured His 'bloody sweat' for us? Ours will then be all the privileges that it earned for us. The 'bloody sweat' of Jesus will dispel all sorrow, fear and agony from our lives and assure us eternal life even now.

Points to Ponder :

The 'bloody sweat' of Jesus was all for me.

The sorrow, fear and agony He endured in Gethsemane were to wipe away my own sorrow and fear.

If Jesus was filled with 'sorrow unto death', it was to enable me escape from it at the time of my death.

Yes ! I can now live happily in this world, and leave it happily to join His presence.

'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee?'

(Psalm 73 : 25).

II. BLOOD

'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.'

(Zachariah 13 : 1)

'And the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.'

(I John 1 : 7)

Sin is an age old problem of mankind. The Bible says that in the beginning God made man and, as a companion for him, a woman. He named them Adam and Eve. He planted a garden for them called Eden, and set them there as his own beloved children. He walked with them and dwelt with them (Genesis 3 : 8, 9).

He had also given them a commandment : 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' (Genesis 2 : 16, 17).

Alas ! man broke that commandment. Even as the Bible says (Romans 3 : 24), he came short of the glory of God and forfeited the Divine presence. From that day onward sin has come to have a stranglehold over mankind. As the Bible says, it is embedded in the blood of every child when conceived in its mother's womb (Psalm 51 : 5).

After man was created, before he forfeited God's presence, God had blessed him : 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and

God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Genesis 1 : 27, 28).

Even when man sinned and forfeited God's presence the above blessing persisted. It did not change. Mankind still goes on multiplying. Yet to redeem mankind from sin God devised a plan outlined in the following verses : 'for the blood is the life' (Deut. 12 : 23). 'For it is the life of all flesh ; the blood of it is for the life thereof' (Leviticus 17 : 14). 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood : and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls : for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul' (Leviticus 7 : 11).

God's judgement over sin was hard hitting : 'And thine eye shall not pity ; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot' (Deut. 19 : 21). 'And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour ; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth' (Leviticus 24 : 19, 20). 'Thou shalt give life for life. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe' (Exodus 21 : 23-25).

Life for life. This was Divine Justice. Sin is so heinous. To atone for the stain of sin in a man's soul a sacrifice must be made. Or else that soul will lose the Divine presence and die. Doesn't the Bible say: 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die' (Ezekiel 18 : 20), 'The wages of sin is death' (Romans 6 : 23)? That is why to save a life smitten by the deadly sin did God prescribe the shedding of blood. For, 'the blood of it is for the life thereof' (Leviticus 17 : 14).

In the book of Leviticus we see God prescribing several sacrifices for man to expiate his sins. Particularly in chapters 4, 5, 6 we read of 'sin offering'. When a sinner admits his sin, he is to take as a propitiation a bullock, a goat, a lamb or a dove to the priest, lay his hand on it—signifying that he has sinned and that the animal or bird is being offered as a sacrifice. The priest slays the animal or bird in the presence of God, and sprinkles the blood, on the altar. God sees the life hidden in the blood, and forgives the sins of the sinner. He saves him from death which his sin deserves. We can see the frequent refrain: 'and it shall be forgiven him' in these chapters. (Leviticus 4 : 20, 26, 31, 35, = 5 : 10, 16, 18 ; 6 : 7.)

God forgives a particular sin of man. Yet, the roots of sin remain in him. He has no victory over his sinful nature. He relapses into sin, performs the 'sin offerings' again and again, and pleads for God's forgiveness. We find this well explained in Hebrews 10 : 1-4 : 'For the law .... can never,with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers there unto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins ? But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.'

The last verse of the passage quoted above contains a profound meaning. Those sacrifices might plead with God to forgive the sins of those who offered them. But they are powerless to remove the stains of sin deep down in their hearts. They cannot assure any lasting victory over the temptations that lead to sin. A practical example will illustrate this.

As a boy I have seen an annual festival in my village. My relatives used to flock to the local temple in families. According to their means they would take with them a lamb or a fowl, and offer it for sacrifice to the priest. He would slay it with one stroke of his scimitar and sprinkle the blood before the idol. The dead animal or fowl would be reverently brought home and feasted upon. They would all be happy in the assurance that all the sins in the family had been expiated by the sacrifice offered and the blood shed. But the happiness was often short-lived. Within a few days some dispute over the sharing of water for irrigation, or some encroachment of the boundary of a field, or differences over division of the ancestral property might lead a brother to murder his own brother. The blood of the sacrificial offering shed a few days ago was powerless against stirring such sinful thoughts as murdering one's own brother.

Will a man's blood expiate the sins of another? How can the blood of one sinful man remove the stains of sin in another? If a sinner is to be made whole, the blood shed for him must be that of a saint. Is there a sinless person on the face of the earth? What does the Bible say?

> 'For there is no man which sinneth not.'
>
> (II Chronicles 6 : 36).

> 'For there is not a just man upon earth, and doeth good, and sinneth not.'
>
> (Ecclesiastes 7 : 20).

> 'For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.'
>
> (Psalms 143 : 2)

> 'There is none good but one, that is, God.'
>
> (St. Mark 10 : 18).

'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin.'

(Proverbs 20 : 9).

'Every one of them is gone back : they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'

(Psalms 53 : 3 ; 14 : 3).

How can one smitten by some poison save another victim of the same poison ? How can one reeling under the influence of drink raise up and steady another drunkard ?

Many years ago an engineer in Government service in north India and his wife were accused of murder and arrested. The one they murdered was none other than their nine year old eldest son. We may be shocked at the unnatural and ghastly offence. On enquiry it was found that they wanted to appease their goddess with human sacrifice so that their sins might be forgiven and their life may brighten up. Man is so anxious to obtain release from sin. Did the parents obtain it from the brutal sacrifice of their darling son ? No. They had heaped sin upon sin. They were prosecuted for murder and punished according to law.

No sacrifice can wash away the sins of man. Nor can the blood of one sinner atone for the sins of another. Where then is redemption ? It was to solve this problem that the God of Gods, the sinless one acclaimed as 'Holy, Holy, Holy' by the angelic hosts, came down to the earth in human form. On seeing Him, John the Baptist exclaimed : 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of world' (John 1 : 29). They named Him Jesus, meaning one who shall save His people from their sins. Jesus himself publicly

declared that He came '*to give his life a ransom for many*' (St. Matthew 20 : 28).

Because He was the Son of God, the image of God in human form, He was sinless, and his blood was sinless. He once challenged the Jews who detested Him : '*Which of you convinceth me of sin ?*' (St. John 8 : 46). Even the Roman magistrate, Pilate, who convicted Him, bore an unique testimony about him before the mob that clamoured for His crucifixion : '*I find no fault in him*' (St. John 19 : 4, 6). Peter, the beloved disciple who had lived with Him for 3½ years and known him through and through, testified : '*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*' (I Peter 2 : 22).

Verily, the sinless blood of Jesus Christ was shed to wash us, sinners, of our sins and give us permanent release from sin. An incident reported in a Bombay newspaper in 1970 touched the hearts of the readers. An 18 year old young-man was unexpectedly caught in a fire accident. He quickly discarded his shirt. But his tight pants, true to its name, tightened around his legs which were badly blistered. He was admitted in the hospital with excruciating pain. Doctors were fighting for his life. One expert said : 'Give me the right skin. I will save him.' Friends, relatives, neighbours all looked at each other in bewilderment, but none offered the skin. At that time his beloved mother came running. She realised what the doctor needed. Without counting the cost she offered any amount of her skin that was needed. 'My life is immaterial ; save my son', she pleaded. The doctor pealed the mother's skin, and grafted it on to her son. The young man was saved. How unique is mother's love !

But what has God got to say ? 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on

the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee' (Isaiah 49 : 15). That mother agreed to part with her skin for her own son. But the Son of God cheerfully agreed to His body being broken and crushed for 'everyone' of his creations, for those who loved Him as well as for those who loved Him not.

There is another unique feature about the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Once my friend's wife had been admitted in a hospital for the confinement. All of a sudden the doctors came rushing to him and said that his wife had bled too much. Blood had to be transfused to her immediately. But the 'O' Group blood she needed was not available anywhere. Several blood donors were summoned to no purpose. Just then my friend asked his blood to be examined. It was of 'O' Group. His blood was immediately transfused to his wife, saving her life miraculously.

Though many offered their blood to save a life, it was of no use. Their blood would not blend with that of the patient. But Jesus Christ, being the Son of God and creator of all mankind, His Divine blood would suit people of all nations and all tribes. How amazing is Divine Wisdom ! No wonder the Bible speaks of Jesus as 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation .... to all men' (Titus 2 : 12). But how great were the torture and pain inflicted on the body of Christ before the grace of God could emerge as blood ?

His body was crushed before blood came out. Wine is delicious. It exhilarates the body and mind of the one who drinks. But in extracting it the grapes are being crushed. The Rose scent emits its fragrance and enchants all around. But the rose itself loses colour, is crushed

and crumpled in the process. Likewise, the body of Christ underwent inhuman torture before shedding the blood which brought salvation to the world.

'I am come to send fire on the earth ; and what will I ; if it be already kindled ?'

'But I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I strained till it be accomplished ! (St. Luke 12 : 49, 50). The above words of Jesus betray his mental agony as He visualised the sufferings in store for Him. We cannot be sure if He meant the flame of the Holy Spirit which descended on the earth, consuming all sin in its path. Let us briefly meditate on His bodily sufferings before His blood was shed.

Gethsemane :

The word 'Gethsemane' literally means 'oil press'. We can still see this site on a hill of olives, opposite old Jerusalem. We can still see olive trees said to date back to the days of Jesus Christ, and a lovely Church of Gethsemane in their midst. The spot where Jesus is said to have fallen on His face and prayed in agony is railed off in the centre of the church.

It was here that the blood of Jesus at first poured forth from His body mixed with His sweat. Even as the lovely rose that yields its scent is crushed, the delicate body of Jesus, 'the Rose of Sharon' was crushed. Just before retiring to the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had observed the Feast of Passover with His disciples. Raising the wine-filled cup in his hand, He said : 'For this is my blood ......' (St. Matthew 26 : 28). Probably He meant that even as the grapes had been crushed to yield that wine, His own body would be crushed before long. Who can fathom the depth of His words !

Even today there is an oil press near the Garden of Gethsemane. Olive seeds are pressed in it for extracting oil. So also, the body of Jesus was crushed in this Garden, and bloody sweat dripped on the ground. A devout Indian who had been to see this sacred shrine knelt right on the spot where Jesus is said to have prayed, and prayed fervently for His blessing. The Holy Spirit then spoke in his mind as follows :

'It is here that Jesus, the Son of God, fell on His face and prayed in tearful agony for the souls of mankind. The place where He shed tears is now vacant. God looks out for those who like Him genuinely love the people and pray tearfully for their souls. Will you fill the vacant place ? If you do, God will ever be with you.'

The devout pilgrim was broken hearted. He pledged himself to a ministry of compassion and sought the blessings of God. The Spirit of God descended on him with great power and is using him even now with renewed strength and grace.

Beloved Reader ! Right where you are take your eyes off this book and close them for a moment. Meditate over the scene of Jesus weeping and praying in agony at Gethsemane for the release of your soul from the clutches of sin. Won't you go near Him and say : 'Lord ! Enough of Thy weeping. From now on I surrender my sinful life at Thy feet. I confess my evil ways. I shall live a pure life hereafter. Let your precious blood wash and cleanse my sinful soul. I will not hereafter make You weep by my sins. I will not pain You further by injuring others or beating my wife. I will not yield to vices like drink and adultery and ruin my body, besides making Your body fall on the ground and shed bloody sweat.'

Won't you assure Him : 'Lord, You saved my soul. Help me to follow Thee. Make me have compassion on the so many who have not yet had the glorious experience of Thy salvation. Lord I commit my life to such a ministry. Take it, and use it as You think fit.'

By your decision may the anguish of Christ be relieved. May His bloody sweat cease, and He be comforted. A saint once sang : 'The wailing in Gethsemane still resounds on all sides, choking our hearts.' What is your response to the challenge of Gethsemane ?

Gabbatha :

While the Son of God was bleeding in agony at Gethsemane, there was heard very near Him a treacherous voice : 'Hail, Master !' It was the voice of the treacherous disciple, Judas. He drew near and betrayed Him with a kiss. Perhaps the bloody sweat of Jesus even tainted his dress and his face. But his bloodthirsty heart was not shocked in the least. Jesus had love even for that traitor, and asked him : 'Friend, wherefore art thou come ?' The next moment Jesus was arrested by the soldiers who accompanied Judas. He was dragged to the palaces of the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. False charges were foisted on him. Rather than kill Him themselves, they thought it better to hand Him over to the Roman Government. Accordingly, He was sent to the Governor, Pilate, who passed Him on to Herod, the King.

'And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate' (St. Luke 23 : 11).

Pilate tried Him again. He could find no fault in Him. The Jews, however, clamoured : 'Crucify Him ! Crucify

Him !' Pilate was in a fix. 'Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him !' (St. John 19 : 1).

The whip used by the Roman soldiers for scourging Jesus was a frightful one. It parted into nine cords whose ends were weighted with an iron ball or a piece of bone. Prisoners were thrashed with it to extort their confessions. Each blow would tear the flesh deeply. As blow after blow fell upon the already mangled flesh, the victims—unable to bear the pain—would cough out the truth.

Just imagine how the deligate body of the innocent Jesus would have trembled beneath those blows ! How cruel were our sins that caused such torture of the body of the Son of God. The Bibe says : 'yet he opened not his mouth ...... he openeth not his mouth. For the transgression of my people was he stricken' (Isaiah 53 : 7, 8). Though He might not have spoken, could His body bear the torture ? Precious blood must have streamed forth.

And did they draw the line there—those stone-hearted men ? They placed a crown of thorns on His head, and hit it hard with their clubs. As the thorns pierced deeper and deeper, streams of blood would have poured all over His body. The purple robe placed over Him was probably intended by the cruel men to camouflage the bloody sight (St. John 19 : 5). Finding that even after all this torture Jesus is alive, with no dismay whatever in His face, Pilate blabbers before the crowd : 'Behold the man !' 'Behold your King !' Jesus stands before Pilate's judgment seat placed on a pavement called 'Gabbatha'. With the crown of thorns on His head, wearing the purple robe, He totters in failing health. Blood streaming from His head would have dripped down His back and, mixing with the blood from His several wounds, must have flowed down His legs and drenched the ground beneath.

Pilate ! I thank you. Yours is the credit for having caused a blood stream to flow from the body of the Son of God, wherein millions of men and women have washed their sins away for the last 2000 years. Little did you know that the prisoner before your judgment seat was 'the lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world'. Thanks to you for discarding your beloved wife's advice : 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man,' and causing the Lamb of God to be pierced, and its blood stream flow at large. Where else could have countless sinners like me washed our sins away and obtained a fresh lease of life ? Our heartfelt thanks to you ! Also, history says that you eventually committed suicide. Our profound sympathies to you, as well, Pilate !

Picturing the agony of Jesus in 'Gabbatha' a certain saint has composed a lyric in the form of a dialogue between Christ and His Church :

The Church :	How is it, O King of Kings ! that Thy Divine visage was ploughed and bruised ? Why is it that you were whipped to bleed all over ?
Christ :	Taking over me the sins of mankind, I submitted to the worst torture that men can devise.

The blood that streamed forth from the body of Jesus before 'Gabbatha' was to quench the fire of Divine wrath that should descend on this sin-stained world of ours.

Golgotha :

Then delivered he (Pilate) him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he (Jesus) bearing his cross went forth into a place

called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, 'Golgotha' (St. John 19 : 16, 17).

As ordered by Pilate, the cross was mounted on the fragile body of Jesus. Golgotha is an elevated place. Unable to bear the burden, Jesus would have climbed the ascent slowly. The impatient Roman soldiers 'laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus' (St. Luke 23 : 26).

Angry with Jesus for being slow, they might have whipped Him even on the road. One thing, however, is certain. The precious blood of Jesus must have been sprinkled on all the streets of Jerusalem that He was dragged along. A certain saint has vividly described his search, street after street, to attain real peace and truth, until he found them in Christ : 'Having lost all sense of direction, I roamed all over the streets. While weeping so bitterly in despair, my Jesus pointed me to a palace so welcome.'

Even as Solomon sang of old : 'will rise now and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth.' (Solomon's Song 3 : 2), he sought and found in Jesus 'the lover of the soul'.

For the peace of our soul, for release from our sins, we may run to several shrines and search street by street. But we can attain that peace only from Jesus, who shed his blood along the streets of Jerusalem. May be, pressed by the problems of life, you are driven along the streets in a search of a job, a means of living. You will derive comfort from the assurance of our loving Saviour : 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

(St. Matthew 11 : 28)

I know a friend holding a high office. His life began in failure. Twice he failed in his degree examination. Life was bitter for him. In restlessness of mind he came to know Christ. He confessed his sins to God and received a new lease of life. A fresh hope welled up in him : 'I am now a child of God. The earth and its fullness are His. He will surely help me.' He prayed fervently and worked hard. He graduated. Unemployment gripped him. He applied for several jobs, went into several offices. The text which gave him comfort in all his attempts was : 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths' (Proverbs 3 : 5, 6).

In all his wandering after a job he meditated over his Saviour who bled along the streets of Jerusalem. All his sorrow, loneliness and frustration vanished ; and the Master who possessed him, also helped him with a job. Later on, he was offered a much better job in which he rose very high.

Friends ! You may be desperately wandering without jobs, with no means of living. Fix your eyes on Jesus who bled along the streets of Jerusalem. Beloved sister in tears, cast away by your husband and walking wearily to your parents, look up to Jesus who walks ahead of you with bleeding feet. He will give you shelter. And you brother, who is walking so fast with tear-stained eyes, resolved to commit suicide, halt ! Wipe your eyes a little and look ahead. See Jesus, the Son of the carpenter of Nazareth, carrying the cruel cross, bleeding all the way. He will cheerfully carry your cross as well. Fellow messenger of Christ ! Are you frustrated that your efforts to sow the seeds of the Gospel, street by street, has been

fruitless ? Faint not ! You have cast the seeds of the Gospel not on barren streets, but along streets enriched by the blood of Christ. You will see the yield at the appointed time. Be patient until then. And you childless sister, scorned by your husband and others ! Look ahead at the bleeding Jesus. Didn't He tear open the Virgin's womb to be born there ? He can do such a miracle with you. Seek shelter at His feet.

Yes, the precious blood of Jesus flooded the streets of Jerusalem as a lifestream for sinners and destitutes. Beloved in Christ ! Commit your life to Him. Let His precious blood cleanse your ways, assuring you life, peace and joy. Be of good courage !

Even as we meditate on the Son of God dragging behind Him the cruel cross, He has slowly ascended the hill of Golgotha. Let us hasten there and watch the happenings—'Where (in a place called Golgotha) they crucified him' (St. John 19 : 18).

The cross is a symbol of shame. For the Jews it was a symbol of curse. Only a cursed man was hanged on the tree. 'He that is hanged is accursed of God' (Deuteronomy 21 : 23). Jesus is stripped of his clothes and stretched on the cruel cross. His outstretched arms are tied to the tree. His two legs are brought together, and tied up. An executioner surveys the bleeding body of Christ. As if he is displeased that there should be blood still left after so much torture and with a view to draw out the remaining blood too, he drives a nail on each outstretched arm of Jesus. Probably blood streamed over his face and his attempt to wipe his face met with a stern rebuke from the Roman soldiers who were in a hurry to finish their job. He then proceeds to drive the last nail through the two feet of Jesus tied together. Blood streams forth again.

The soldiers hasten to erect the tree before it is dark. All this rude handling should have caused unbearable pain to Jesus. Fresh blood pours out of his hand and feet. His tongue dries up and he shouts: "I thirst". More than mere thirst, it indicates the parched condition of the dying body, from which all blood has been drained.

Who is it that hangs in the cross like an orphaned convict ?

He is the miracle maker ! Friend of the sinners !

Healer of the lepers ! The one who chased out evil spirits !

The Divine Physician !

The Compassionate Christ ! The one who roused the dead from the grave !

The one who chastened the wind and the waves !

The one who turned water into wine !

How is it that one with such miraculous power hangs so miserably on the shameful cross ? The death of Jesus on the cross had been forecast in the Bible many centuries back : "Messiah (Jesus) shall be cut off, but not for himself" (Daniel 9 : 26). For whom else then was this blood shed ? "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53 : 6).

It was all for us ! for us ! ! for us ! ! !

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (II Corinthians 5 : 21).

For us ! For us ! ! For us ! ! !

Even as ordained by God : 'Without shedding of blood is no remission' (Hebrews 9 : 22). And that is why the Son of God sheds His blood on the cross for the remission of the individual and collective sins of mankind.

'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53 : 6). The sinless Christ was made sin for *our* sake. Every drop of His blood was to cast away *our* sins. The torture He underwent was not for Himself. It was all for *us* ! for *you* ! for *me* !

I read of a happening many years ago. A convict condemned to capital punishment for heinous offences like burglary and murder was awaiting the day of his execution. A beloved lady engaged in the Ministry of God, visited him one day and gave him a Bible to read. He threw it away indifferently in a corner of the cell.

That night, while fast asleep, he dreamt a very pleasant dream. At a great distance he saw a gleaming city. The fragrance and music emanating from the city thrilled him. Its citizens appeared so happy. Suddenly he saw in their midst his devout mother who had died long ago. She seemed to beckon her son so fondly with both her hands. Instinctively he ran towards his beloved mother. He was fast nearing his mother to be folded in her fond embrace. Just then a dark hill was rising between him and the dream city. He ran fast, saying that he would cross it before it could rise high enough. But the hill had risen sky high before his approach. He dashed his head against it and wept bitterly. Pining for his beloved mother and the lovely city across the hill, he cursed it for its intervention. But it was of no avail.

On a closer look he found that the hill before him was but a huge wall built of square blocks of stones. On each

stone something had been inscribed. He was shocked to read them. For, on each stone was inscribed the name of some deadly sin in him. He realised that his own sins had risen as a wall between him and his mother. How true are the words of the Bible : 'Your sins have hid his face from you' (Isaiah 59 : 2) !

His anger and irritation subsided. In deep remorse he cried whether there was no way for him to go to his mother. Just then he saw a thrilling sight. A drop of blood from heaven above fell over the wall, and in a moment the huge wall dissolved in that blood and disappeared ! There was also heard a voice from above : 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' The dream ended and the convict woke up. Casting his eyes around the cell he picked up the Bible which he had once discarded. Opening it at random, he chanced to read I John 1 : 7. What he had heard in the dream now stared at him in cold print : 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' He screamed aloud to Jesus, confessing without reserve every sin of his. 'Wash me, Saviour, with your precious blood', he humbly pleaded ; and he became a new creature altogether.

The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross for *us*, for *you*. Do we have any experience of our sins being forgiven ? If not, let us even now in our meditation bring the crucified Christ before us. Let us search our souls as to which of our sins were responsible for His agony on the cross. Let us confess them in His presence and ask for pardon. Let us submit ourselves to be washed clean in His blood.

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness !' (I John 1 : 9).

'And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin' (I John 1 : 7).

The Son of God laid his ghost with these last words on the cross : 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' But the Roman soldiers had a little doubt. As if to make sure that Christ was dead, 'one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water' (St. John 19 : 34).

The blood that gushed out that day still keeps flowing to wash the sinners of their stains. Anyone coming to the cross is sure to attain salvation from sin. A saint has thus sung of his experience :

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins ;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day ;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.
E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

III. THE WOUNDS AND THE SCARS

'And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about an hundred pound weight. Then took the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.'

(St. John 19 : 38, 40)

While meditating over the above verses, I tried to visualise the scene. The body of Jesus, the Son of God, hangs lifeless on the cross. His disciples who boasted that they would lay down even their lives for Him have fled. There is none near the cross. Joseph, who was a secret disciple of Jesus when He was alive, sees the ghastly sight. His heart trembles. He acts with a rare presence of mind. He runs to Pilate and asks the body of Jesus to be handed over to him. After making sure through the centurion that Jesus was really dead, the permission is granted. Joseph rushes up the hill of Golgotha again.

Another secret disciple of Jesus—Nicodemus—comes from another direction with myrrh and aloes. Both come near the cross. Blood is still streaming from His side where He had been pierced with a spear. The sight chills their blood. They ask the soldier nearby to give them the body. He rudely pulls out the nails from the hands of Jesus. The body collapses. Supporting it

among themselves, and, forgetting for a moment that their Saviour was dead, they plead with the soldier to pluck the nails gently, lest they should pain Jesus. The soldier ridicules the plea and proceeds to pluck the nails from the feet of Jesus. They fall stiff like a rootless tree. Nicodemus holds the feet and Joseph lifts the head. The soldier discharges the body indifferently and goes to relax with his colleagues.

In the desolate silence around them Joseph and Nicodemus stare at each other. Tears well up in both their eyes. Holding the body of Jesus in their hands, they could not even wipe their tears. Heaving a sigh from the depth of their hearts, they wail together 'O, Lord !' Each shares the other's woe. They could not understand that such fate should have overtaken One whose hands touched and healed tens of thousands with diverse diseases who were brought to Him.

(St. Luke 4 : 40)

Nicodemus : Are these the beloved feet that rushed to heal anyone who called ?

Joseph : Are these the miraculous hands that fed more than four thousand with just seven loaves and a few fishes ?

(St. Matthew 15 : 32)

Nicodemus : It is all so baffling, Joseph ! Are these the feet that walked over the sea of Gannesareth to save Peter and His other disciples, now reduced to this plight ?

Joseph : Are these the hands that touched the bier of the son of the widow of Nain and made him arise alive, now grown so cold and lifeless ? When are we to see such miracles

again ? I see darkness all around. The Light of the world has been extinguished.

Nicodemus : Are these the feet that walked in search of the grave of Lazarus in Bethany, four days after his death, to raise him alive, now needing the support of this unworthy sinner ? When shall we see again such beloved feet set out on their errand of mercy ?

Joseph : Lo ! Wounds all over the back. Wound in the chest caused by spear thrust. Why these wounds all over the body of Him who came to bind the brokenhearted ? Why ? Why ? (Isaiah 61 : 1)

Nicodemus : Why these wounds on tender feet—kissed, adored and anointed by sinners and the self-righteous alike—inviting them to walk to someone dear to them in the grip of sickness and death ? (St. Luke 7 : 38 ; 8 : 41)

The questions that were raised in the minds of these two men find an echo in our hearts and minds today. Why these wounds on the body of Jesus who was the image of Love, and showered nothing but His love on men ? Why did God allow them ? What does the Bible say in answer to these questions ?

A. Transgression :

'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities' (Isaiah 53 : 5). Our transgressions were one reason. 'Who hath woe ? Who hath sorrow ? Who hath contentions ? Who hath babbling ? Who hath wounds without cause ? Who hath redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine ; they that go

to seek mixed wine' (Proverbs 23 : 29, 30). Here we see one reason for 'wounds without cause', namely drink. Likewise, we see countless men enslaved by deadly habits in daily life.

A friend of mine had a strange disease. In his sleep at nights he would get up without his knowledge and run about screaming in fear. He would scale walls and fences; and in the morning he would be found lying somewhere wounded and bleeding. 'Why these wounds without cause?' he would bewail.

Wicked habits may appear so inviting at first. 'At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder' (Proverb 23 : 32). They would bring about severe 'wounds without cause' in the body and in family life. Society is plagued by many such sinners. Sin is poisonous.

In 1963 I read about a pathetic incident in the newspapers. A certain wealthy man arranged the marriage of his only daughter with a medical student. The marriage was celebrated in a grand style. The bride's father promised to pay a certain amount to his son-in-law. But he thought that he could pay it on the completion of his studies. This enraged the young man. For several months he kept away from his wife. Then one day he came abruptly, and was given a royal welcome. At mid-night, after all had retired to their beds, there were heard screams of 'Murder! Save me soon!' It was the voice of the newly married daughter. The room had been locked inside. The police was summoned. When they broke open the room they saw the daughter lying dead on the floor. The police version was that the husband had attempted murdering the wife with a poisonous injection. Since she woke up suddenly

and foiled it, she was beaten to death. During the post mortem examination, severe wounds were found in 23 places in her body.

What caused those wounds? A simple sin namely, greed. Because the young man was a victim of that sin there were caused 23 'wounds without cause' in another body. It was to destroy sin which causes such wounds, to avert such 'wounds without cause' that Jesus was wounded. Didn't the prophet also forecast of His wounds: 'and with His stripes we are healed?'

(Isaiah 53 : 5)

Peter again explains this as follows: 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.' (I Peter 2 : 24)

Another reason for the wounds over the body of Jesus was that He offered to carry our sins causing 'wounds without cause', and received on His body wounds which should be ours. His wounds and scars were meant to heal our souls. The Bible describes Jesus as 'altogether lovely'. But when He hang on the cross, 'He hath no form nor comeliness : and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him' (Isaiah 53 : 2). Yes ! to deliver us from all evil habits, to ward off 'wounds without cause' the body of Jesus was wounded all over.

Some years back, at revival meetings held in a certain place, a very hard-hearted army man accepted Christ. His life was miraculously transformed. One day, as he tried to board a bus, the conductor pushed him aside for no reason. He prevented his boarding the bus; and when he would not get down, the conductor pulled

him by his shirt and threatened to tear it to pieces. If the passenger had been his old self, he would have torn the conductor to pieces. But he didn't speak a word. Filled with the love of God, he shed tears even without his knowledge. It melted the hearts of other passengers, they pleaded for him, and got him into the bus. It was the wounds of Jesus, that transformed that person's life, which now averted 'wounds without cause'. Do you complain that you have no mastery over some vice, some evil habit? It was to liberate you that the body of Jesus was wounded. He submitted to be broken that you may not be wounded. Fall at His feet, and pray for your release from sin. He will have compassion on you and deliver you. Don't we have the promise of our Saviour: 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, he shall be free indeed?'

(John 8 : 36)

B. Diseases :

'When, the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses' (St. Matthew 8 : 16, 17).

The prophesy referred to is in Isaiah 53 : 4—'Surely he hath borne of griefs; and carried our sorrows'.

Man's physical ailments and weaknesses also contributed to the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus. Let us see how the wounds were caused in the body of Jesus. The Bible says that Pilate gave him up to His soldiers to be scourged. There was a practice in ancient Rome for the soldiers to elect each year one of their slaves as their

'mock king' during their festival days. He would be then offered whatever he asked and greeted with shouts of 'Hail King !' On the last day of the festival he would be offered as a human sacrifice to their favourite goddess. In course of time this practice gave way to another alternate practice.

The Governor would hand over the criminals condemned to death to the Roman soldiers. They would scorn him as the 'mock king' and thrash him soundly. In Jerusalem today can be seen the 14 stations on the way of the cross —depicting the various scenes, such as where Jesus collapsed, where He met his mother, where Simon was asked to carry the cross and so on : The second of these stations is where Jesus was tortured as the 'mock king'. It was part of Pilate's palace where the soldiers lived and their horses were stalled. There are evidences to show that some 300 to 600 soldiers were there. They thrashed Him severely, scoffed at Him, and beat Him with clubs.

His entire body was broken, wounded all over. What for all those wounds ? The Bible says that they were all for *our* sins, and *our* diseases. What a comforting thought !

The Bible says that we are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in us (I Corinthians 3 : 16). If our bodies are the temple of God, how certain is it that God will take care to maintain it Whatever organs of our bodies may be diseased and affected, let us remember that the same organs of Jesus were once wounded, for our sake.

The Bible says that when Jesus lived as man on this earth of ours. He 'went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of

the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people' (St Matthew 9 : 36). What did He say even three days before Judas Iscariot betrayed him? 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!' (St. Luke 13 : 34) What is it that made Jesus heal the sick? It was the compassion He had for them (St. Matthew 14 : 14; 20 : 34; St Mark 1 : 41). In St. Luke 4 : 40 we can see that 'he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them'. It was His compassion that made him offer His body to suffer for our deadly diseases.

I once asked a very devout person with a burden for praying for the sick and power to heal them, what made him so much concerned over the sick. He said that in 1955 he accepted Jesus as his Saviour. Real peace filled his soul. Sinful ways vanished and he became spiritually whole. Yet, for several years his body was languishing in sickness. In the meantime he had begun reading the Bible with care. He read how Jesus accepted the sick, and healed each one. He wept bitterly and prayed with tears for his cure. Miraculously he was healed that same moment. Desirous of sharing the joy that had come into his life, he began proclaiming to the sick in body and mind the blessing that he had received from Jesus. Many desired him to pray for them; and he did.

Drawing strength from the promise for Jesus: 'Verily verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father' (St. John 14 : 12) He prayed God to use him as a channel of His comfort and blessing to the sick. For several months he prayed with real burden in his heart.

On the 10th October 1962 Jesus came in search of him. While he was praying, he filled him with his Holy Spirit. He had a vision of him, and for full three hours he was filled with his presence. This experience brought him to a turning point in his life. Even as promised by God in Romans 5 : 5. 'Because the love of God is shed abroad, in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. He came to feel a great compassion for the sick from that day onwards. He said that the love of Christ urged him to pray for them.

God is love. For the sake of man's agony he experienced agony in Gethsemane. To atone for man's spiritual disease—that is sin—He was himself made sin on the cross and shed His precious blood. He experienced in His own body the weakness and diseases which we suffer from.

Do you pine from some incurable disease? Do you suffer for years together from some unbearable pain? There is just one cure for you. Believe that the wounds inflicted on Jesus were for every disease of yours. Believe that the compassion of Christ will pierce through you. He will heal you in His mercy. As He himself bore these diseases on His person at the cross, He surely knows and feels your pain and sickness. He will heal you. His compassion is changeless.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared in a glorious vision to His disciples. They were entranced. One of them—Thomas—was not present then. On his return the others told him of their having seen Jesus. 'The other disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after

eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God' (St. John 20 : 25-28).

This incident points to an important truth. Even after his resurrection the celestial body of Jesus bears the scars of wounds inflicted on His person. Today, as we pray for our bodily needs, our physical ailments, He would look at the scars in his hands. His own agony would come to His mind. He would then place His pierced hands on us and heal us.

There is another interesting fact. When a person becomes a child of God, He assures him: 'Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands' (Isaiah 49 : 16). On his palms He has not only our images, but also the wounds caused by the nails that were driven on the cross. So, whenever He sees his palms He sees there not only your image, but is also reminded of His travail on the cross; and He heals you. What a blessing it is to live as a child of God! What a privilege it is to have our image engraved on His palms amidst His own wounds!

As long as there are these wounds and scars on the body of Jesus, they will give us strength to heap off all sinful ways. They will liberate us from all bodily sufferings.

Let us picture for a moment the wounded body of Jesus. We can boldly say, 'The pain in His hands was to keep my own hands in good health and free from sin. The pain in His legs was for my own legs.' In this way we may link

every part of our body with those in the body of Christ broken and crushed on the cruel cross. The Bible says : ' For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones ' (Ephesians 5 : 30). We abide in Him. For He is the vine, and we are the branches (St. John 15 : 5). So, it is certain, that His life will flow in our body and mind. ' With His stripes we are healed ' (Isaiah 53 : 5).

IV. THE CRUSH AND THE FIRE

'I came to set the earth on fire ; how I wish it were already kindled ! I have a baptism to receive ; how distressed I am until it is over' (Luke 12 : 49-50—Today's English Version).

'I am distressed !'—these are words which we so often hear in this woe-filled world. 'When will I find money to pay my son's college fees ? And how to pay the school fees for the two younger boys ? My daughter and son-in-law are expected to come home for their first Christmas after marriage. I have to purchase dresses for them and entertain them in proper style. My younger daughter's wedding day is nearing, and no arrangements have been made as yet. My youngest son has injured his leg on the playfield and lies in the hospital. My wife is ever sick and bed-ridden. I don't know what sin of mine has brought all this distress on me ?'

This lament is typical of the wailing of crores of men and women. It is no wonder that mortals, unable to cope with the problems of life, are thus distracted. But the one who thus laments in the text prefixed to this chapter is not a human being, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is unbelievable, yet it is true. The Bible says that those painful words proceeded from Him. If so, let us see in the Bible itself what is it that made Him confess such pain and anguish.

God is Love !

God is love ! In the Old Testament we see how much He loved the people of Israel. Whenever they were

oppressed at the hands of enemies, it seems He would also suffer. Whenever they were tortured He would consider Himself as tortured likewise ! 'And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge ; for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them' (Judges 2 : 18).

He bemoans the hardships of His people at the hands of their enemies ! 'Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought ? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord, and my name continually every day is blasphemed' (Isaiah 52 : 5).

'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them ; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old' (Isaiah 63 : 9). 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God : for God is love' (I John 4 : 8). 'Yea, He loved the people' (Deuteronomy 33 : 3).

How true do these words ring ! Let us verify this truth with a few examples from the Bible itself.

After the people of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 430 years the Lord heard their groanings and sent His servant Moses to liberate them. He pleaded with the Pharaoh, performed so many miracles with the power of God, redeemed the Israelites and led them to the land of *Canaan*. During their journey they would pitch their tents and rest awhile. The Lord raised a pillar of cloud to lead them by day and a pillar of fire to lead them by night. He dwelt with them all through (Exodus 6 : 2-8 ; 12 : 40-41 ; 13 : 21-22).

He was not content with merely being their guide. He spoke to Moses: 'And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them' (Exodus 25 : 8). 'And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God' (Exodus 29 : 45). 'And I will set my tabernacle among you' (Leviticus 26 : 11)—Thus He disclosed His desire to dwell with His people even in their tents. He who claimed: 'The Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool' (Isaiah 66 : 1), whose praises are sung by a host of angels (Revelations 5 : 11), who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto (I Timothy 6 : 16), delighted to dwell in desert tracks amidst Israelites who loved Him! How amazing was His love and compassion!

One of the great martyrs for India's freedom—Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose—was leading towards Singapore the Indian National Army he had raised. A slight misunderstanding led to a division of the army into two. On hearing it, Bose drove straight and camped amidst his soldiers. Because of Bose's presence in their midst the differences did not show themselves. Yet Bose knew that all was not well with the two factions. One day at meal time Bose made the two rival factions sit in two rows facing each other. As they began eating, Bose slowly walked in their midst, took a morsel of rice from each plate and ate it with relish. This act of Bose brought tears to the eyes of every soldier. His humility, his boundless and indiscriminate love for every soldier touched their hearts. Unable to repress their feelings, they leaped to their feet. Hugging their beloved leader, they 'wept aloud.' For a while Bose could not emerge from their 'ghaero' of love. Before long he was moved to tears by the sight of the two bitter groups of soldiers locked in fond embrace, shouting unitedly: 'Long live our leader, Netaji'!

We notice here the unfailing love that Netaji had for his soldiers, even when they erred and quarrelled among themselves. With no pride whatever of being their leader, he went and lived in their midst, prompted by genuine love for them, and shared their simple food. Even so, God 'who is love', loved to dwell among the people of Israel. When they were oppressed by enemies, He Himself felt oppressed.

When you are in travail and tears, and if your love for God is genuine and deep, forget not that He is also in travail with you. Long time ago, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, set up an image of gold, and ordered all his subjects to fall down and worship it on pain of being cast into a burning furnace. Three Jewish Chiefs—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—defied the order, saying that they would serve none other than their true God. The enraged King commanded the three men to be bound and cast into the fiery furnace. Just when the King thought that he had disposed off the three who had defied him, he saw a strange sight which made him burst forth : 'Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' (Daniel 3 : 25).

Yes, the invisible God, when His faithful devotees were cast into the fire, Himself leaped into the fiery furnace to share with them their agony. How boundless is His love !

If your love for Him is real, He will likewise be oppressed at times of your distress. In his presence the fire will lose its fury, and you will come unscathed from any peril. As the poet has well said :

'The flames may surge from the burning bush
On Horeb's desert bare ;

Yet, fear not, and see the bush unscathed,
And Jehovah's presence there.'

Our God is no distant, 'father, which art in Heaven'. He loves to dwell in the midst of his devotees sharing in their weal and woe.

The Son of God was Love Manifested !

Two thousand years ago, the invisible God came to this earth in mortal form to redeem His creation, mankind, wallowing in sin. He was named 'Jesus', 'for He shall save His people from their sins' (St. Matthew 1 : 21).

Jesus declared of Himself: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' 'I and my Father are one' (St. John 10 : 30).

Describing Jesus, the Bible says: 'who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature' (Colossians 1 : 15). 'Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person' (Hebrew 1 : 3).

In Jesus, the Son of God, is seen reflected the entire nature of God.

In Isaiah 63 : 9 we read: 'In all their affliction He was afflicted.' The same God, when revealed in flesh, pain fully declared: 'How distressed I am......!' (St. Luke 12 : 50—Today's English Version). The same compassion seen in God was seen in the Son of God as well.

There is yet another significant aspect of the affliction experienced by the Son of God. In the Book of Revelation 5 : 6, St. John sees a vision. He saw the open door in heaven and God's throne set up therein. Amidst these pleasant sights he also saw a gruesome sight: 'And

beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain' (Revelation 5 : 6).

The prophet Isaiah, who had been vouchsafed a vision of the suffering of Jesus hundreds of years ago, had forecast : 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53 : 7). We can readily infer that this vision depicts Jesus being led to the Cross. The lamb seen by St. John also points to Jesus. But there is a striking difference between the two visions. Isaiah saw a lamb being brought for slaughter, while St. John saw a lamb in the process of being slaughtered. This lamb was being slaughtered day and night. What a gruesome experience this would have been ! We feel inclined to ask how long this lovely lamb is being slain. The answer is that it is being slain not today or yesterday, but 'from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13 : 8). The Bible speaks of God's foreknowledge : 'known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world' (Acts 15 : 18). 'Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world' (Hebrews 4 : 3). Even as He willed to create the world, He willed to create mankind which will multiply, fill and rule the world. He seems to have so resolved even before He created the world. The Bible also says : 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1 : 4). In the beginning, even before the creation of the world—when God decided to create man—was also born the Son of God. This truth is evident in the words of the psalmist : 'I will declare the decree ; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee' (Psalm 2 : 7).

Even before the creation of the world the Son of God was born to bear the sins of mankind that was to fill the

world later. From the day man sinned and fell from Divine favour, the sins of mankind are being heaped upon the Son of God in his Father's lap. He was being scourged for the sins of mankind. When He appeared in flesh in this world of ours, John the Baptist rightly described him: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (St. John 1 : 29). Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, is being continually scourged, right from the creation of the world. For how long is this agony to last? God was distressed; His Son was distressed, was scourged, is continually being scourged. Why? One is reminded of a moving episode in English history.

When Oliver Cromwell ruled over England as the Lord Protector, very stringent rules were in force. A young soldier was charged with an offence before Cromwell, who sentenced him to be shot dead at the ringing of the Church bell the next evening. As the fateful hour drew near the soldier was blindfolded, his hands were bound together, and he was set on a rock. His executioners were ready, waiting for the chimes of the Church bell. Darkness was stealing in, but no chimes were heard. Cromwell was stunned, the executioners were confused. The culprit himself was at a loss to know how he was still left alive. Just then there came rushing from somewhere a young maid, and fell prostrate at Cromwell's feet. She could not speak. She just raised her two bruised arms bleeding profusely. Cromwell gauged the situation in a moment.

That young maiden had been engaged to the soldier. On hearing the death sentence pronounced upon her fiancé, she was resolved to save his life at any cost. She climbed up the belfry in the afternoon and waited for hours together. She clung fast to the bell's clapper, folding it tight with both her arms. At the fatal evening hour the sexton came

and rang the bell. The young maid knew that as long as no sound emerged from the bell, her lover's life was safe. And she was resolved that the bell would not sound that evening. At the risk of her life she clung fast to the bell. Her arms were bruised with every stroke of the gong. But she bore all the pain, remembering her lover who stood defenceless at the cannon's mouth. The sexton was deaf. He was unaware that not the least sound emanated from the bell that evening, and that only a woman's arms were breaking in pain with each pull of the rope. He had done his job and went his way. The poor maid climbed down and anxiously ran to see if her lover was left alive. She saw the great Cromwell there and fell at his feet. Cromwell was moved by her heroic sacrifice. He assured her that her lover was granted reprieve. Unmindful of the piercing pain caused by each stroke of the bell, she had saved one life. Likewise Jesus has been bearing, since the creation of the world, the sins of us all and the penalties thereof. He is being continuously scourged and distressed. Yet, for the salvation of the world He patiently bears all the pain and agony.

Didn't King David, when he sinned and fell, confess "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned"? (Psalm 51 : 4).

Didn't the prophet Jeremiah bewail : "for we have sinned against thee"?

Didn't the repentant Prodigal Son admit : "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight"?

Every sin is regarded as directed against God ; and so the propitiation for every sin falls only on Christ.

While meditating on the passion of Christ, we should ask ourselves whether we should still sin and add to His

agony on the Cross as if it won't suffice. Let our constant prayer be: 'Lord, grant me the strength not to sin. I don't want to cause you pain by my sinful acts. Guard me in holiness day after day.'

We are likely to think that the agony of Jesus has ended with His sufferings on the Cross. Let us read Acts 9 : 1-9. A young man, Saul, set out to the city of Damascus to persecute the disciples of Jesus. 'And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks' (Acts 9 : 3-5).

The one who spoke thus to Saul was the Risen Christ, seated on the right hand of God. Saul persecutes the disciples of Christ, and yet Christ asks him: 'Why persecutest thou *me*?' Paul himself admitted later: 'and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blasphemy: and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities' (Acts 26 : 10-11). And yet Jesus alleges that Saul persecuted Himself. How unfathomable is the love of Jesus! The same Saul, after his conversion, prays: 'that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge' (Ephesians 3 : 17-19).

The above instance bears out that even as the sins of man continuously inflict pain on Jesus, the Lamb of God, the

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sufferings of his disciples again cause him affliction. Fear not, child of Jesus ! You have a peerless friend to share the burden of your sins and be afflicted with you. Cast all your burden upon him. Recall the experience of King Hezekiah : 'O Lord, I am oppressed ; undertake for me. What shall I say ? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it !' (Isaiah 38 : 14-15). Let it be yours as well.

'The Crush and the Fire':

In the foregoing pages we saw that even today the Son of God is being afflicted by the sins of mankind and the sufferings of his beloved. But in the text prefixed to this chapter Jesus says that he is 'afflicted' for yet another important reason : 'I came to set the earth on fire ; how I wish it were already kindled ! I have a baptism to receive ; how distressed I am until it is over !' (St. Luke 12 : 49-50 Today's English Version).

Ordinarily we meditate over two motives for the incarnation of Christ : 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (I Timothy 1 : 15). 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (St. Luke 19 : 10). But in the text prefixed to this chapter Christ makes a shocking claim : 'I came to set the earth on fire.' Is Christ, the embodiment of Love, to set the earth on fire ? We may leave this controversy for awhile and go to see another exciting scene described in the 18th chapter of I Kings. God's chosen people of Israel forsake the commandment of the Lord and seek other gods. As a punishment a severe famine overtakes the land. God calls Elijah, and instructs him what he should do for his people to repent for their evil ways and be reconciled to him. Accordingly, Elijah collects the Israelites on Mount

Carmel and erects an altar for the Lord. 'And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood' (I Kings 18 : 33).

And Elijah prayed: 'Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.' Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God' (I Kings 18 : 37-39).

The fire that descended from heaven made the Israelites turn from their sinful ways in fear and return to their Lord.

There is a similar scene in II Chronicles 7 : 1-5. King Solomon erected a stately temple for God. By way of dedicating it, he fervently prayed: 'Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength' (II Chronicles 6 : 41).

What followed is thus reported in the Bible: 'Now when Solomon had made an end of praying the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves, with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying: For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever' (II Chronicles 7 : 1-3).

In both the above instances, as soon as the fire descended from heaven, people were pricked in their conscience and returned to their God. They could see the fire descending. Jesus claims that he came to the earth for people to have a continued experience of that kind, so that their hearts may be ever inclined towards God. Elijah and Solomon prayed and brought the holy fire from heaven. The Bible says that likewise the Son of God also came 'to send fire on the earth' (St. Luke 12 : 49). Didn't John the Baptist, who introduced Jesus to the multitude, testify : 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire' (St. Matthew 3 : 11) ?

In His last discourse with His disciples Jesus also confirmed the words of John the Baptist : 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence' (Acts 1 : 5 ; 11 : 16). The promised day did come ; and the Bible thus describes the miracle that happened then : 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts 2 : 1-4).

Yes, as promised by Him, He filled them with the fire and the Holy Spirit. St. Peter thus described the experience of the Pentecost : 'Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which we now see and hear' (Acts 2 : 33). Love shed forth the fire and the Holy Spirit. Christ claimed to

have come to the world to do that; and He fulfilled His claim!

And how great was the distress He experienced before He could fulfil His claim! The words: 'who offered Himself without spot to God' (Hebrews 9 : 14) no doubt refer to His sufferings on the Cross. But even earlier He should have experienced various other sufferings. Hence His moving statement: 'I am distressed'. Apart from bodily pain, so numerous were the mental agonies He experienced.

His own brethren believed Him not (St. John 7 : 5). His relatives said: 'He is beside himself' (St. Mark 3 : 21). His own countrymen were offended by him (St. Matthew 13 : 57). The people said that He was a deceiver (St. John 7 : 12), that He had a devil in Him (St. John 7 : 20). Some attempted to stone Him and kill Him (St. John 8 : 59; St. Luke 4 : 29). The Pharisees derided Him (St. Luke 16 : 14). One of his disciples was all the time seeking an opportunity to betray Him (St. Matthew 26 : 16). No doubt, the agony on the Cross was the climax of Christ's sufferings. But it is evident from the foregoing texts that Christ was being continuously distressed.

The fire that descended on earth in answer to the prayer of Elijah and Solomon consumed the offerings on a man-made altar. But the fire of the Holy Spirit, which was brought down by the distress experienced by Jesus, descends on human hearts and consumes the roots of sin.

In the two earlier instances the divine fire was seen just once and disappeared shortly. But the Holy Spirit that descends through Jesus Christ abides with us for ever (St.

John 14 : 16), and draws out of us 'rivers of living water' (St. John 4 : 14 ; 7 : 38).

Once I had an opportunity of seeing a huge hydroelectric station. Water had been stored in an extensive lake above the Power House. Brought through pipes from above, the water gushed into the power house and rotated a giant wheel. The electricity so generated was carried through wires thousands of miles away, bestowing so many blessings on the people.

I marvelled at the Power House and the numerous gadgets in it. As I came out I noticed a bronze plaque with some names inscribed on it. I was distressed to read the inscription. For, the names were those of the engineers and their assistants who had lost their lives in the hazardous task of designing the gigantic project. If the electric power flowing from that Power Station gave sustenance to so many thousands, it was due to the sacrifice of those few who had braved the dense jungles, faced the wild animals, smelted the rocks, and in the course of their duty offered their lives. Likewise, to usher in the fire of the Holy Spirit and brighten the spiritual lives of millions and millions of men and women, the Son of God himself had to experience great agony, and ultimately offer Himself as a sacrifice on the Cross.

Before concluding our meditation on the agony experienced by Jesus, let us examine the significance of that undying fire of the Holy Spirit which issued from that agony and the blessings it has conferred on mankind.

A. Spirit of Burning :

'And it shall come to pass ...... when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion,

and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning' (Isaiah 4 : 3-4).

Two phrases in the foregoing verse—Spirit of Judgment and Spirit of Burning—explain the function of this Divine Fire. Our Lord Jesus also thus explained its function : 'And when he (Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment' (St. John 16 : 8).

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah is recorded a vision. The prophet Isaiah seen the presence of the Lord filling the temple, and arousing in him a consciousness of sin. He blurts out : 'Woe is me ; for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips' (Isaiah 6 : 5).

Then follows a contradictory ;experience : 'Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs .from off the altar : and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged' (Isaiah 6 : 6-7).

The presence of God aroused in him a consciousness of sin. But the live coal from the altar purged it.

'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3 : 23).

'For there is no man that sinneth not' (1 Kings 8 : 46).

The above verses emphasis that there is no sinless man on the face of the earth. Yet, we seldom realise that we are sinners. When the Holy Spirit descends upon our hearts we have the same experience as Isaiah's. The so many secret shortcomings and sins in the innermost recesses of

our hearts flash before our eyes ; and even without our knowledge, make us blurt out ; 'Woe ! I am unclean !'

Once I had been to see a factory which manufactured iron pipes. A scientist there took me to a certain gadget and explained its function to me. He gave me a piece of iron to see if there were any defects in it. It was smooth and well polished and I could not see any defect in it. He then fixed it to the gadget, which traced several ups and downs on a graph board placed above it. My friend explained that certain rays which were emitted by the gadget pierced through the iron, detected the most minute defects like air pockets and registered them on the graph. I was amazed that what appeared to my eyes as a perfect piece of iron should have so many defects. So also, our lives, which may seem so perfect and holy in our sight, when exposed to the searchlight of the Holy Spirit, will be found to contain so many deep laid sins.

The gadget which I saw could only point out the defects. But the Holy Spirit can not only reveal our sins but also consume them. As St. Paul says : 'And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God' (I Corinthians 6 : 11). The Holy Spirit is the Divine Fire consuming all sins.

Let us take for example a sinful man who goes to a Gospel meeting. There he listens to the words from the Bible which are spirit, which are life (St. John 6 : 63). Through those words the Holy Spirit reveals his shortcomings, and he weeps bitterly for his sins. He implores him : 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner !'. The blood of Jesus shed on the Cross cleanses him of all the stains

of sin. The burden of sin having rolled away, he feels a lightness in his heart which makes him sing:

'At the cross! at the cross! where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!'

No doubt, this is a wonderful experience. But all is not over with that. Let us imagine that we have exhausted all the air from a container. Nature does not allow a vacuum anywhere; and so some air would rush in and occupy the container. So also a heart purified of sin is now vacant. According to the law of nature, as days go by, former sins and wicked ways try to force their way back. Many a Christian redeemed by the blood of Christ has thus succumbed to sin again. St. Peter has thus described this plight: 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning...... But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire' (II Peter 2:20; 22).

Lest this should happen, it is necessary for a heart washed with the precious blood of Jesus to be filled with His Divine Fire. Once His 'burning spirit' fills the heart emptied of sin no weeds or rubbish can ever refill it.

Once I had been to Teheran, the capital city of Iran. In the Central State Bank there had been displayed the jewels of the King and the Queen of Iran. At the entrance

was a signboard with a warning : 'Don't go near or touch the wires around the glass showcases containing the jewellery.' The sentry there explained to me that if anyone were to touch the wires—as they carried electric current—the alarm bell would ring at once and those who touched the wires, would be arrested for attempted burglary.

The method adopted to guard the priceless jewels is really commendable. In certain other banks in the Western countries one could see warning like this : 'Burglars beware ! The cash chest has been electrified.' If, defying this warning, anyone were to touch it, he would get electrocuted and die on the spot.

How much trouble is taken by banks to guard their valuables ! They employ so many sophisticated devices, using electricity to assist them. Isn't the soul of man more precious than these ? 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? (St. Mark 8 : 36-37).

Christ himself has said that our soul is more precious than all the wealth in this world. If that is so, it is very essential that our hearts, emptied of sin should be charged with that heavenly electricity, that Divine Fire which is the Holy SpiriI. It will consume any sinful desire that might attempt to steal into our souls, and guard us in holiness.

It was to pour into our souls the Divine Fire of Holy Spirit, powerful enough to save our souls from 'the sin which doth so easily beset us' (Hebrews 12 : 1), that Jesus bemoaned : 'How distressed I am !' and was distressed in ever so many ways.

Obey the command of God : 'That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us' (II Timothy 1 : 14), and implore Him in tears : 'Lord, fill me with thy Holy Spirit so as to save my soul.' Leave not His feet until that Divine Fire descends on you. Till then may the song of Rev. Santiago of Madurai, who so movingly wept and prayed for that Divine Fire, be also yours to meditate upon :

'My sins are many, they are too stubborn,
For earthly fire to scorch and burn.
My efforts to them so futile and mean,
Till Fire from Heaven shall blast them clean.'

B. Spirit of Supplication :

'And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications' (Zachariah 12 : 10).

Two more names have been given in the above verse to the Divine Fire that descends from Heaven. They are 'the Spirit of Grace' and 'the Spirit of Supplication.' The phrase 'Spirit of Grace' can be seen again in Hebrews 10 : 29.

This Divine Fire, when it fills a soul, is not content with saving it from the power of sin. It creates in it divine love and concern for other souls which have not yet attained this rich experience and are still wallowing in sin. It prompts it to implore God for such souls in tearful supplications.

Was there ever born on earth one so filled with the Spirit of God as our Lord and Saviour—Jesus, Son of God? John the Baptist, who prepared the way for him, testified

of him : 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him' (St. John 3 : 34). The Son of God, who had received the Spirit of God in such abundance, shed tears on seeing the miserable plight of people wallowing in sin. He spent saveral nights praying for them (St. Luke 5 : 16 ; 6 : 12). 'And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes' (St. Luke 19 : 41, 42). 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are ssent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered the children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not !' (St. Luke 13 : 34).

His tears and wailing for souls doomed to destruction, so evident in the above verses, pierce our own hearts. A soul filled with the Divine Fire is also filled with the Spirit of Supplication, which casts on it a burden for souls wallowing in sun and urges it to pray to God for them. It makes these souls weep and wail, even as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, burdened in spirit for all mankind.

St. Paul, who claimed : 'For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus' (Galatians 6 : 17) had no doubt received the 'Spirit of Supplication' evident in the life of Jesus. We can see this time and again in his Epistles : 'Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches' (II Corinthians 11 : 28). 'For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them that are at Laodicea and for a many as have not seen my face in the flesh' (Colossians 2 : 1). 'For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without

ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers' (Romans 1 : 9).

It was because St. Paul was filled with this 'Spirit of Supplication', like our beloved Saviour Jesus, that he pleaded with such spiritual burden for so many. We see that St. Paul's disciples, again filled with the same 'Spirit of Supplication', prayed fervently for those who heard the Gospel—that they might be strengthened in the new faith. For instance, we read St. Paul's testimony in Colossians 4 : 12 that Epaphras 'laboured fervently in his prayers' for the faithful brethren in Colossee: 'Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that dye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God' (Colossians 4 : 12).

In the fourth Chapter of the Book of Acts we see a moving sight. By the faith of two apostles—Peter and John—a lame man was healed in the name of the Risen Christ. The infuriated high priest, elders and scribes 'called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus' (Acts 4 : 18).

When they reported this to the other disciples, filled with the Spirit of God, none was afraid. Instead, filled with the Spirit of Supplication, they prayed: 'Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word' (Acts 4 : 29).

Because these people were filled with the Divine Fire, they also possessed this Spirit of Supplication. All through history we can see this same experience in the lives of saints who were used by God.

David Brainard, whom God used so mightily among the Red Indians of America, used to dig holes among ice

blocks, kneel therein and pray tearfully for the salvation of the people. He would pray so, even in failing health, his lungs bleeding all over. As a result, a large number of natives repented and accepted Christ.

The saintly John Knox would wail in prayer: 'Lord, give me this Scotland. Or else I will die praying.'

I heard a moving account about a saint, Dowie. God had showered on him the 'healing gifts' in abundance. His tearful prayers had given release to tens of thousands of people from their physical ailments. Even in his death-bed he was mobbed by the sick. They were lined up on either side of his bed. He was too weak to raise his arm. His friends had to place his hand on the sick one by one. Yet the 'Spirit of Supplication' in him was not extinct. It was pleading that whoever was touched by his hand should be healed.

Though Jesus feels pained because 'the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few', he could use only those filled with the 'Spirit of Supplication' like him. It was to impart this Spirit that he was burdened. It is good that we desire to do noble service for Jesus. But shouldn't we make sure that we have received the Divine Fire which he sent to the world at such great cost? How can we spread the good news of Jesus unless our souls are burdened with concern for souls that are about to be doomed?

The Divine Fire that descended in answer to Elijah's prayer just consumed the sacrifice. But the Divine Fire of the Holy Spirit, that descended as a result of the agony of Jesus, makes the soul it fills offer itself as a sacrifice for others. It made St. Paul say: 'And I will very gladly

spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved' (II Corinthians 12 : 15). 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren' (I John 3 : 16).

Let us examine if this love and sacrifice are in us. If not, let us pray fervently to be filled with the Divine Fire.

C. Spirit of Power :

'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind' (II Timothy 1 : 7).

The disciples of Jesus lived with him for 3½ years. They witnessed his miracles. He too 'called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick' (St. Luke 9 : 1-2).

He testified about them : 'Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you' (St. John 15 : 3).

To the seventy disciples chosen by him he said : 'Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven' (St. Luke 10 : 20).

Very good certificates, no doubt ! But do these qualifications alone entitle them to be his disciples? He who gave them such good testimonials also told them some thing else at the time of his leaving them : 'And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high' (St. Luke 24 : 49). 'But ye shall receive

power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1 : 8).

The two foregoing verses make it abundantly clear that the holiness which his disciples had received, the privilege of their names being seen in the Book of Life, the power He had given them to drive the devils and heal the sick were totally inadequate for his mission, and that he was going to grant them above all these a 'power from on high'. And they will be endued with His 'power from on high' after the Holy Ghost is come upon them. Yes, the Divine Fire sent by Jesus confers a 'power from on high' on the soul it resides in.

We see that even Peter, who betrayed Jesus, when filled with the Holy Spirit, received His 'power from on high'. That gave him courage to accuse the Jews: 'Jesus of Nazareth . . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain' (Acts 2 : 23). And the Bible says that 3000 persons gladly received His word and were baptised that day.

As we read the Old Testament, we see that God's chosen people—when commissioned to a battle or sent to do a difficult job—were at first filled with His Spirit. On Moses He had already placed His Spirit (Numbers 11 : 17). He filled Joshua with 'the Spirit of Wisdom' (Deut. 33 : 9). 'The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon' (Judges 6 : 34). 'The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jepthah' (Judges 11 : 29). It 'came mightly upon' Samson (Judges 14 : 6, 19 ; 15 : 14). It came upon David (I Samuel 16 : 13 ; II Samuel 23 : 2) upon Elijah and Elisha (II Kings 2 : 9 : 15).

Mighty works were done through all these men. They accomplished through the Spirit of God certain tasks assigned to them. In the New Testament we see two things done by the Divine Fire in the souls it descends. It imparts an indescribable spiritual power from above. The lives of those filled with this Divine Fire are rich in attributes seen in Christ himself. We read of those Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 : 22, 23 ; Ephesians 5 : 9 ; Philippians 1 : 10 ; Colossians 1 : 10 ; James 3 : 17, 18. They are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. He can surely see these nine fruits in the lives filled with the Holy Spirit. They are tokens of the superb spiritual strength received from the Holy Spirit.

I have had the good fortune to meet in India and Ceylon persons who had met Sadhu Sunder Singh. I asked them what the most striking characteristic they noticed in his life. They all said that it was the Divine Peace always seen in his face and the love with which he spoke and moved among the people which attracted them. This fact can be gathered from his biography as well. When he came to Kerala tens of thousands of people thronged to see his face filled with Divine Peace and to hear his addresses on Christ. Some of them approached him and sought his prayers for their bodily ailments. He told them that he had no gift of healing and dispersed them without a prayer. Though outwardly there were no gifts or powers of healing in him it is obvious that the fruits of the Spirit manifest in his life drew to Christ several thousands all over the world. The Divine Fire poured on His followers in the world by the agony of Jesus Christ brings to their souls a unique power from above. It is God's will that all who love Jesus should receive this Divine Fire and through that the nine Fruits

of Spirit and the power from above for extolling Christ to the world. It was to confer this boon on every one of us that Jesus was 'distressed' (Hebrews 21 : 9). If these attributes are not seen in our lives, let us today itself humbly fall at the feet of Christ and implore Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit :

'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive : thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them' (Psalm 68 : 18). 'Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men' (Ephesians 4 : 8).

Before ascending to heaven our Lord Jesus Christ promised us : 'I will not leave you comfortless' (St. John 14 : 18). Moreover, He spoke clearly about the Holy Spirit that He would be sending : 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you' (St. John 14 : 16, 17).

From diverse walks of life Jesus called His disciples to follow Him. They too, on hearing His call, abandoned all their earthly possessions and followed Jesus. So, at the time of parting, He so movingly told them : 'Little children, yet a little while I am with you, ye shall seek me : and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go, ye cannot come' (St. John 13 : 33).

He love them all through the 3½ years He dwelt among them. At the time of parting they were filled

with sorrow (St. John 16 : 6, 22). It was by way of comforting them that He spoke about the Holy Ghost, the Comforter whom He would send. He assured them that He would come and comfort them. He referred to the Holy Spirit as 'The Comforter, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father' (St. John 15 : 26).

He who said : 'I have a baptism to be baptized with' (St. Luke 12 : 49) accordingly experienced the sufferings of the Cross and offered Himself as a sacrifice. He ascended into heaven. From there 'having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this' (Acts 2 : 33). While sending the Divine Fire of the Holy Spirit to the world He showered along with it the nine Gifts of the Spirit. A list of these Nine Gifts is contained in I Corinthians 12 : 8-10. They are :

1. The word of Wisdom.
2. The word of Knowledge.
3. Faith.
4. The gift of Healing.
5. The working of Miracles.
6. Prophecy.
7. Discerning of spirit.
8. Divers kinds of Tongues.
9. The Interpretation of tongues.

All these are contained in the Divine Fire of the Holy Spirit, generating in a person superb spiritual Strength. The Nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit manifest in any work he may do for God His unique spiritual power. We can see these gifts manifest in every aspect of the ministry of the apostles : 'Long time therefore abode they speaking

boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands' (Acts 14 : 3). 'And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul : so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them' (Acts 19 : 11, 12). When Elymas the sorcerer resisted the word of God, Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, said : 'And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season' (Acts 13 : 11). Immediately, his eyes were darkened ; and the chieftain, who saw the miracle, accepted the Lord. 'And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people' (Acts 5 : 12). 'Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits : and they were healed every one' (Acts 5 : 15, 16). 'For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God' (Romans 15 : 18, 19).

Linking all the above verses, St. Paul states succinctly : 'So great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ?' (Hebrews 2 : 3, 4).

The Holy Spirit that descended from God confers its gifts among people, manifesting the Power of God, and honouring the ministry of proclaiming salvation through Christ. Even today Christ confers these gifts on those who are filled with the Divine Fire.

There is a railway track on which the train climbs up the hills in Nilgiris. It differs from the usual track on the plains. The railway bogies plying on this line have toothed wheels in the middle which are lowered when the train has to climb up the hill. They slip into a third grooved track laid in between the two ordinary lines, enabling the train to climb up the hill, with no fear of slipping back. The toothed wheel makes all the difference between the ordinary train and the hill train. There is a similar difference between the ordinary Christian life and a life filled with the Gifts of the Spirit through the Divine Fire. Amidst all tribulations and opposition in life, the Gifts of the Spirit act like the toothed wheels, and enable one to climb up to heaven.

To suit each context and need there are appropriate gifts. To understand divine profound secrets, the word of knowledge is useful. When trapped in a difficult situation the word of wisdom finds out from God and tells us the way out. When our faith falters the gift of faith brings to us faith in God. While ministering among the sick the gifts of healing come in handy as a balm. When besieged by enemies and tossed by insurmountable evil forces the gift of miracles comes to our aid. The gift of prophecy forecasts what is yet to happen. The discerning of spirits enables the release of those tortured by the power of evil spirits. The gifts of speaking and the interpretation of tongues are helpful to understand tongues spoken in heaven and spoken on earth by people inspired by the Holy Spirit,

as also in the ministry among people who speak languages totally unknown to us.

How lovely are these gifts ! How divinely strong will a Christian life be filled with those gifts !

When at first we read the words of Jesus : 'I came to set the earth on fire ; how I wish it were already kindled ! I have a baptism to receive ; how distressed I am until it is over !' (St. Luke 12 : 49, 50—Today's English Version). We wondered whether it was to set the earth on fire that Jesus was distressed so much. Some of us thought what significance there could be in a fire to bring down which Jesus Himself bewailed that He was 'distressed'. But when we meditate on the above three attributes of the Divine Fire—how it saves man's soul from sin, how it makes the soul it fills shed tears for others dying in sin, and how it imparts the power from heaven above to those who receive it and to their ministry—we realise how significant this Fire is. No wonder that Christ was 'distressed' so much to bring it down from above. Nothing less than everyone of us receiving it and experiencing its blessings can adequately recompense the 'distressed' Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Let us examine ourselves a little whether we have received in full the Divine Fire of the Holy Spirit which the 'distress' of Jesus vouchsafed to the world. If not let us ask Him who freely bestows His spirit on all who desire it. Let us rejoice. Let us gladden the heart of Jesus.

V. THE TRAVAIL AND THE REWARD

'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities' (Isaiah 53 : 11).

In the earlier chapters we have seen how patiently Jesus Christ bore His distresses. The Bible says that He would see the reward of all His distresses and be satisfied. That can be only by making righteous as many as possible. In short, He is satisfied when we realise benefits of His physical, mental and spiritual agony. So, let us meditate briefly how best we can experience the benefits of His travail.

(a) The Redemption that is the Forgiveness of Sins:

'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins' (Ephesians 1 : 7). 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins' (Colossians 1 : 14). The above verses maintain that the redemption of the 'forgiveness of sins' is in Jesus Christ. Anyone desirous of forgiveness of sin should at first believe that Jesus Christ was crucified for him, and that He bore the sufferings on the Cross for his sins.

'Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins' (Acts 10 : 43).

Secondly, it is no use admitting in a general ways that we are sinners. For the Bible says that 'the devils also believe, and tremble' (James 2 : 19). Hence, it is essential that we should confess in our prayers the specific sins

in our lives, as the two following verses indicate: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (I John 1 : 9). 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy' (Proverbs 28 : 13). It was only when Hannah poured out her soul at the feet of God that she received His blessings. The Bible advises us: 'Pour out your heart before Him' (Psalm 62 : 8).

Thirdly, as enjoined by St. Paul: 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you' (Ephesians 4 : 32, Colossians 3 : 13).

That was also the command of our Lord Jesus: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (St. Matthew 6 : 14, 15).

Didn't He teach us that every time we pray we should check up if we have forgiven any wrongs done to us by others? (St. Mark 11 : 25, 26).

Fourthly, if we have taken anything wrongfully from anyone, restoring it is a mark of salvation. Don't we read in the Scriptures: 'And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold Lord, the half of my goods, I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house'? (St. Luke 19 : 8, 9).

As per the assurance: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house' (Acts 16 : 31). God forgives the sins of anyone who believes

that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for his sins and confesses his sins to Him. He, in turn, instinctively loves his enemies, forgives any wrongs they might have done to him and restores whatever he had wrongfully gained. After such experiences he will live joyfully in this world, assured of the forgiveness of all his sins.

(b) All Round Prosperity :

'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth' (III John V. 2). 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' (Romans 8 : 32). 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' (St. Matthew 7 : 11).

The above verses make it evident that it is God's will and pleasure to give us each day our daily bread. Blessed are those who confess their sins to Christ Jesus, and receive through Him the forgiveness of their sins. God becomes their Heavenly Father (Galatians 4 : 7 ; Romans 8 : 15-17). He provides with pleasure all their needs. We need not be anxious when besieged by sickness, poverty or danger from enemies. There is just one thing we have to do : 'Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ' (Philippians 4 : 6, 7). 'Cast all your care upon him ; and he careth for you' (I Peter 5 : 7).

As exhorted in the above verses, when the clouds of life's problems surround us, let us kneel down and pray

tearfully, telling our Father all our needs in the name of His son, Jesus.

'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it' (St. John 14 : 14). 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full' (St. John 16 : 24).

According to His above promises, He will hear our prayers and release us from all our troubles.

However, there is something important ; when we pray we expect God to act in a particular way. When things do not happen as we want them to, we are depressed. But God is wise beyond measure. He would answer our prayers only in His own way. Only then will it be a blessing for us. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgements and his ways past finding out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? Or who hath been his counsellor ? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ?' (Romans 11 : 33-35). For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts' (Isaiah 55 : 9). Don't these verses instruct us that God's wisdom is immeasurable and His answers to our prayers so amazing ? Hence, let us conclude all our prayers on the same note as Jesus, the Son of God, did : 'Nevertheless, not my will, but time, be done' (St. Luke 22 : 42), committing the mode of answer in His hands.

May the experience of the saint who sang :

'How many were my woes when my will wouldn't work !

I fall at Thy feet and shall live for Thy praise.'

be ours as well.

(c) All Spiritual Blessings :

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ' (Ephesians 1 : 3).

Christ holds in His hands all spiritual blessings. When anyone asks for them, He grants them so freely. 'For everyone that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened' (St. Luke 11 : 10). 'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ' (Ephesians 4 : 7).

The Gifts of Christ are ours for the saking. To receive the Divine, Spiritual blessings, to receive the Holy Spirit and its gifts we have to do two things. In the first instance, even as commanded by our Lord—'Search the Scriptures' (St. John 5 : 39)—we should study the Bible and find out what blessings God has promised us therein.

Secondly, as enjoyed by St. Paul—'Desire Spiritual gifts' (I Corinthians 14 : 1)—it is necessary that we should desire all spiritual gifts. To 'desire spiritual gifts' means 'have an unquenchable thirst for spiritual gifts'. We have the promise of God : 'For I will pour water (of Holy Spirit) upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground' (Isaiah 44 : 3), which requires that there should be in our hearts a profound thirst to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In the last words of the saintly David we have his testimony that all through his life he was filled with the spirit of God II Samuel 23 : 1, 2). That was due to his genuine thirst after God, so evident in the following words from his mouth : 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God,

for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ?' (Psalm 42 : 1, 2). 'O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is' (Psalm 63 : 1).

Unless we are discontent with the spiritual blessings we have received and have a genuine desire for drawing still closer to God, it is impossible to receive the Spirit of God.

In the 2nd chapter of II Kings we see another example. The time drew near for God's prophet Elijah being taken into heaven. His disciple, Elisha, followed him. 'Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me' (II Kings 2 : 9). Accordingly, he received a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Didn't Jesus, the Son of God, again leave behind His parting promise : 'Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto my Father' (St. John 14 : 12).

Beloved reader ! Christ is still eagerly waiting to shower on us the blessed power of the Holy Spirit promised in the above verse, and glorify His Name through us as well. Let us pray that He should use us also as such blessed vessels. Only if you so desire, and plead earnestly in prayer, will you receive that blessing. Let us follow the footsteps of our Lord : 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (St. Matthew 16 : 24). He will surely fill us with all heavenly blessings.

One last word ! While we desire the Holy Spirit and pray for it the one doubt that arises in our mind is whether we are fit to receive it. Beloved ! 'All our righteousness are as filthy rags' (Isaiah 64 : 6). 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God' (II Corinthians 3 : 5).

The above verse implies that our sufficiency is all through Christ's sufferings in Gethsemane and on the Cross. The Holy Spirit is the greatest treasure earned for us by Him at such great cost. Hence we have a right to pray boldly to be filled with it. May God hear our longings and prayers and fill us to the brim with His glorious Spirit ! May He make you shine as a beacon of light in a world steeped in darkness !

About the Author

BRO. D. G. S. DHINAKARAN surrendered himself to Jesus Christ at the young age of 20, when he was at the cross-roads of life The 'Love So Amazing' that flowed from Christ really overwhelmed him that he decided to tell the whole world about that love.



He has been faithfully doing it by sending out messages of God's love through literature, radio programmes, records, cassettes, films and public meetings.

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